

Newsletter published by the SHIBA HelpLine Regional Managers, for time-sensitive health insurance news. Please pass the information on to others!

The latest headlines:

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) warns public about Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (Part D) phone scam: CMS warns seniors and people with disabilities to not give out bank account information over the phone to enroll in Medicare Part D. The scammers ask for dollar amounts that range from \$299 to \$379. True Medicare drug plans do **not** ask for payment over the phone or the Internet. Report any cases to your local law enforcement agency.

CMS grants special Part D enrollment period for folks getting the low-income subsidy (LIS or extra help) and folks affected by Hurricane Katrina: Medicare clients who qualify for LIS or who live in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina may enroll in a Part D plan with no penalty through Dec. 31, 2006. If folks disenroll after 2006 and do not have other coverage as good as Part D for 63 days or more, they will incur a penalty if they later re-enroll in a plan.

Social Security Administration (SSA) urges folks eligible for LIS to apply for Part D: SSA recently mailed a letter and application to 500,000 people nationwide who may be eligible, but have not yet applied for extra help with Part D. If folks think they qualify, SSA urges them to fill out the application and return it. Clients may also apply online at www.socialsecurity.gov or over the phone at 1-800-772-1213/TTY: 1-800-325-0778, or in person at the nearest Social Security office.

Basic Health (BH) changes income requirements: BH will use new income guidelines starting July 1. Also, BH will no longer count some types of income, such as capital gains and crime victims' compensation benefits. For more information about these changes, read the online fact sheet at: <http://www.basichealth.hca.wa.gov/doc/25-610606.pdf>.

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